



THE CANADIAN INDIAN SNIPERS AND WORLD WAR 1

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ABSTRACT

Historically, relations between Indigenous Indians and the non-native Canadian State have shifted significantly from cooperation to confrontation marked by open conflicts and discords. The Great War in Canadian annals marks the golden period where both indigenous people and their colonizers buried their differences and converged on the platform of a common national identity. National records show Canadian natives showed up in great numbers to voluntarily enlist for the Great War. Though their size in terms of the total conscripts in the combat force was small, their valor and strategic wars skills made up for the lacking numbers and contributed immensely to the success of Canadian troops. Indians soldiers including snipers like Lance-Corporal Norwest, Francis Pegahmagabow, Philip McDonald, Riel, Ballendine and many more have been honoured by Canadian establishment for their exemplary courage and contribution to the war fighting. This paper attempts to explore the history of Canadian Indian Snipers and their contributions to WW1. It will also delve into how Indians participation in the War led to better acceptance of Indians in Canadian society.

KEYWORDS: Alliances, Treaty, Great War, Native Soldiers, Snipers and Veterans

NATIVE-EUROPEAN ALLIANCES IN COLONIAL CANADA

Edward Ahenakew, a Saskatchewan Cree clergyman submitted his testimony during the Royal Commission's hearing: "The Indians of Canada may look with just pride upon the part played by them in the Great War, both at home and on the field of battle". By their wartime services "they [Indians] have well and nobly upheld the loyal tradition of their gallant ancestors who rendered invaluable service to the British cause in 1775 and 1812," he said. (RCAP 1996 :549) Canadian Indians¹ assimilation efforts particularly during the Great War have been marked in Canadian history as the golden period where both indigenous people and their colonizers buried their differences and converged on the platform of a common national identity. Indians have been well-appreciated and applauded for their valour in the war which proved their loyalty to the State and confirmed their legendary warrior skills. Keeping their old grievances aside, their participation in the War made them fight courageously for Canadian land "as valiantly as their hostile fathers ever fought against it"². It was seen as an opportunity for Indians "to align themselves for civilization against a mechanical and scientific barbarism"³ and their voluntary enlistment "publicized patriotism as proof of their readiness for unrestricted citizenship". (BARSH 1991: 288)

Arthur C. Parker, the first president of the society of American Indians argued that "Indian soldiers were fighting against all injustices, including the injustice perpetrated by White against Indians" and their participation was an attempt to ensure that "there be not more treaties broken"⁴ and their alliances with European people should remain intact. Parker explained: "Loving liberty as he [Indian] does, he will fight for it", because "his country, his liberties, his ideals and his manhood are

assailed by the brutal hypocrisy of Prussianism" thus Indians, "responded and shown himself a citizen of the world and an exponent of an ethical civilization wherein human liberty is assured"⁵. By defending for Canada, Jonathan F. Vance states they defended for 'western civilization' and by doing so "they [Indians] entered into a special relationship with the country" and "his attachment to a mother figure paralleled the nation's relationship to Mother Britain and confirmed him as the heir to 300 years of Canadian history". This way each and every "individual soldier represented Canada; he was Canada personified". (VANCE 1997: 136) Hence, "Indians battling in a universal struggle" of First World War, was a fight for liberty, freedom, recognition of their rights and brotherhood and as soldiers Indians did not lack in efficiency nor will in bravery⁶. However post-war years Canadian Indians were disappointed with the state for not matching their expectations and "the dreams of a strong and vibrant pan-Canadian nationalism built on the memory of the Great War were dashed" because realities of peacetime contrasted with realities of wartime. (VANCE 1997:258)

Prior to Europeans' arrival on the North-American continent, natives of the region were organized into distinct nations on the basis of their ways of life, customs, values, beliefs and governance system. The invasion by Spaniards, French and British from Europe disrupted and destroyed the Native American way of life and governance system. Ryan Barrett posits, "Spanish conquistadors destroyed the Native American way of life in Central and South America, while the British and the French were the major European powers who disrupted Native American activities in North America". However, initial interactions were based on cooperation and led natives to develop friendly relationships with Europeans. For example,

sporadic inter-tribal wars and hostilities commonly existed among native nations, ranging from individual aspirations to achieving a community's economic and political goals such as gaining access to territory or resources made natives seek Europeans' help and by the early seventeenth century, natives were "caught in the web of relationships created by French, British and Spanish penetrations of the continent". (BARRETT 2013: 7)

The history of alliances between Canadian natives and Europeans predate the European settlement and were often codified in trade, marriages, friendship and peace. Later alliances vis-à-vis treaties set new practices and protocols based on nation-to-nation basis to mark friendship and peace between natives and newcomers, thereby, creating a relationship of mutual respect and trust. The associations between Indian and European nations were a bond defined by reciprocal duties and obligations, and sealed with natives' rituals. Such arrangements were often managed with a sense of reverence wherein as honorable partner Indians felt a sense of loyalty and responsibility towards Europeans and rendered their war time services to them. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples defines such alliance as, "an alliance [which] was more than a political agreement or simple affirmation of partnership. It was an arrangement perceived as embodying a sense of [equilibrium] balance among members, [along with] an important spiritual dimension; it was a bond of mutual obligations held together by [a deep-felt sense of] honour". (RCAP 1996:545)

Thus, Indians' military alliances were first made with French settlers to counter British expansion in terms of grabbing control of resources and manpower as well as to avoid raids by other Indians. Through the system of diplomacy and gifts, French were able to establish good relations with Indians. This was done for two reasons: to dominate as fur traders in the North American continent and to take help of native warriors in times of war. Thus, Indians such as "the Micmacs, the Montagnais, the Algonquins, the Objibwas (Chippewas), the Ottawas, the Potawatomis, and so on", had good relations with French people⁷. (TUCKER 2013: 4) Interestingly, it was not before the French and Indian War (1754-1763) that British sought allegiances of the natives, especially Iroquois tribes, to help them gain strategic military advantages against French. Further, during the course of American Revolution (1775-81) Britain became the most preferred ally of Indians and their relationship mainly focused on military aid where both parties depended on each other for protection and survival. In fact, the period from 1774-1815 witnessed a British Indian policy "geared primarily to ensuring the preservation and defence of Canada through the military use and assistance of His Majesty's Indian allies". (ALLEN 1993: 13) "By the mid-eighteenth century, most Britons agreed that Indians were an integral part of the most important part of the British Empire". (BICKHAM 2013: 230) The military cooperation of Indian allies was well appreciated till the war of 1812⁸.

Alliances, hence, created relationships, obligations and duties for European powers. For example, "in their struggle for the land of the Old Northwest, the Indians had since 1775

leaned heavily upon British assistance" and British, too, relied on Indians to conquer and maintain its imperial power on Canadian land. (HORSMAN 1963:60) These alliances engaged Indians in to a sense of loyalty towards the European newcomers and later "aboriginal peoples were allying with the Great Mother, Queen Victoria, the embodiment of British Crown, [who] offered protection and assistance [to indigenous peoples] in return for land for settlement". (RCAP 1996: 546) In other words, it can be said that till the War of 1812, Indians continued their alliances with British settlers by rendering their wartime services, but in the subsequent years, appreciation of Indians' military skills and their strategic support in helping control the land and its resources started to diminish in the eyes of the British. This was due to various raids, wars and unrest. For example, the Rebellions of Upper and Lower Canada in 1837 and 1838, the Fenian raids of the 1860's and the unrest in the Northwest during 1860's until mid 1880's. (MISIACZEK 2012: 402) Another reason was decline in the native population due to epidemic diseases like malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis etc. Further, the national motive to accommodate more Britishers in North America made British Crown to ignore their Indian allies; this was done through the passage of Royal Proclamation in 1763. No doubt the Proclamation did recognize natives' right to their ancestral land, it is one such prerogative document which established the relationship between natives and British newcomers, and set out rules and regulations for British to deal with native peoples—especially in relation to the question of occupation of land. Between year 1713-1754, English settlement grew steadily and in order to accommodate new people, Britain acquired more land by displacing these native peoples. (WHITFIELD 2006:14) Consequently, British settlers through their various policies started to ignore Indians in the following years and the tribes, who had fought as British allies, especially "those tribes that had fought in the Revolution and in the Indian wars of the 1780's and 1790's" were repeatedly deserted by the British. (HORSMAN 1963: 60) This suggests that English, who once recognized the natives as owners of North America, dealt with them on a nation-to-nation basis, now considered them as unwanted people. Therefore, the coming of British rule in eighteenth century threatened Indians status as 'allies', their title to land and sovereignty.

FIRST WORLD WAR AND INDIAN ENLISTMENT

From the mid-eighteenth century, there were three fundamental changes which altered the relations between Canada and its indigenous peoples. First, there was an increase in the non-indigenous population, particularly following loyalist immigration from the US to Canada after the War of Independence with Britain which sharply increased the demand for the lands of indigenous peoples in Canada. Second, there was a shift in economic activity from fur trade to an intensive use of the land for farming, timber harvesting, fishing, and above all, permanent settlements. (NETTHEIM ET AL. 2002:82) Further, in 1799, when Department of Indian Affairs was placed under 'civil authority', British, no longer required the indigenous people or the indigenous lands. The British, who earlier had recognized the indigenous communities as independent nations and treated them as equals and as 'nations', now viewed them as "tribes" or "bands". (PONTING AND GIBBINS 1980:4-5)

Later, various governmental assimilationist policies attempted to assimilate Indians into British White society which led to creation of reserves and setting of residential schools⁹. Living on reserves, in turn, created feelings of hopelessness. Leaving reserves became little hope for natives and when the Great War of 1914 took place, Indians wished to participate in the war.

From the second half of the 19th century, Indians soldiers started conscripting in the Canadian Army to serve alongside Canadian troops fighting overseas. In year 1884, 56 people from Mohawks tribal group from Kahnawake in Quebec and 30 from Objibwa group from Manitoba and Northern Ontario, served in the Battle of Khartoum, Sudan. (SUMMERBY 2005: 9) Similarly, at the outbreak of the Great War, Indians with great warrior skills, enthusiastically offered their military services to the state, a phenomenon documented by Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan C. Scott. He posited in the Annual Report, 1914, "I have pleasure in drawing attention to the fact that the participation of great Britain in the war has occasioned expressions of loyalty from the Indians.... some bands have also offered the services of their warriors, if they should be needed". (DIA 1914: xxviii) One year after the war, Indians "displayed a keen interest in the progress of the war" and on voluntary basis, individual Indians started to enlist in Canadian military, which gave "ample evidence of their loyalty". (DIA 1918: 14) They all "approached military service with an eye to their history of relations with the British Crown-very much as they had preserved the memory of their treaties and alliances among themselves. They wanted the government to understand that as allies, they were free to offer their services to the Crown, each individual according to his own decision". (RCAP 1996: 546)

According to *Annual Report* 1918, "more than four thousand Indians enlisted for active service with the Canadian Expeditionary forces", which comprises 35 percent of the Indian male population from following provinces: Ontario, Quebec, Maritime provinces, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. (DIA 1918: 13) By doing this, "the Indians [excluding non-status, metis and Inuits] [have] indeed established for themselves a magnificent record, which should place their race high in the esteem of their fellow-countrymen and [as] our [British] Allies"¹⁰. Despite this, the exact number of Indians' participation in the Great war is unknown. This is, further, confirmed by Department of Indian Affairs, 1918, "undoubtedly, many Indians have enlisted of whom the department has no definite information"¹¹.

Moreover, discouragement on the part of British government officials to recruit Indians from remote and interior regions, has also been noted in the *Annual Report* of Department of Indian Affairs 1919, which says "large part of the Indian population is [was] located in remote and inaccessible locations, are unacquainted with the English language and were, therefore, not in a position to understand the character of the war, its cause and effect"¹². Further, the lack of education on the part of Indians made them face rejection at large. Additionally, the stereotypical images of Indian based on their 'cultural difference' with European made them look inferior to the colonizers and their

"communities are [were] seen as 'other' that must ultimately be brought within the pale of the national community and culture". (CHAMPAGNE 2005: 3) This was primarily based on the fact that in the early twentieth century, culture was viewed in relation to others. One such definition described it as "the totality of the mental and physical reactions and activities that characterize the behaviour of the individuals composing a social group collectively and individually in relation to their natural environment". (BOAS 1938: 159) Indian practices such as human sacrifices an integral part of their belief system made Europeans to believe that native Americans were 'uncivilized' and 'barbarian' in nature. Such Euro- Canadian thinking that native peoples were inferior "because of their religion, culture, and level of technological sophistication" (GRENKE 2005: 203), rendered their social position disadvantageous.

British officials also held the notion that since Indians were natural born British subjects and that they did not possess the rights to vote, their exemption from military services is necessary as explained by Victor W. Wheeler who writes that: "Canadian Indians were exempted from its operation [war] in as much as they were wards of the Government and therefore considered minors legally". (WHEELER 2000:150) Further, on 8th August 1914, soon after four days of Britain's declaration of war, Minister of Militia Sir Sam Hughes stated "while British troops would be proud to be associated with their fellow subjects, Germans might refuse to extend to them the privileges of civilized warfare, therefore it is considered...that they had better remain in Canada to share in the protection of the Dominion"¹³. This Hughes stated as a reply to one of district commanders named Colonel W. E. Hodgins (WEAVER 2014: 127) This official exclusion made majority of Indians suffer the embarrassment of rejection despite being "strong, hardy men, who would have made excellent soldiers"¹⁴ while only few got selected.

It is pertinent to mention that this exclusionist policy was intentional for two reasons; First, in the beginning of the twentieth century, "consolidation of the Canadian settler-state was going and the potential for armed Indian resistance still existed" especially in prairies. In such a scenario, employing Indians in military capacity was seen as a threat to the domestic security of Canada.(WINEGARD 2012: 7) Secondly, the policies of assimilation and various government programs were already implemented (such as reservation system, residential schools, industrial schools) for civilization and protection of Indians until they were completely assimilated into the Euro-Canadian society.

Despite these setbacks, Indian participation in war was sizable and impressive. Their response at the outbreak of war was varied and also difficult to pinpoint. Apart from the loyalty to British Crown, it was a moment for them to join in the footsteps of their fellow friends and relatives; for others "the chance of adventure or simply to earn a guaranteed wage"; still for others "to escape boredom on the reserve" as "reserve life had made the role of Indian men less important". (SUMMERBY 2005: 8) In case of others, it became a means to "confirm to masculinity" and to re-affirm some practices and values that were declining. Some

wished to “put up a name for the Reserve, so that they could say that they had one of their boys over here”. (STORY 2015: 5-6) Also, many hoped for a better life for their communities through enfranchisement. For instance, an agent for Vancouver reported that Indian men, in order to enlist, demand the right to vote, believing that enfranchisement would bring positive change for their communities. (TALBOT 2015: 110) Thus, natives had their own particular reasons, whether personal or communal-benefit driven, for their decision to enroll for war. Moreover, the war was supposed to be short-lived and get over by Christmas, so, initially Canadian infantry was filled with British servicemen, many with prior military service.

Despite the prejudices against native Indians, “certain regiments had been discreetly recruiting Indians since 1914” which led to the formation of many Battalions. (WALKER 1989: 8) For example, 107th Battalion had “high proportion of western Aboriginal recruits” and 114th Battalion in Eastern Canada consisted of six Nations, Kahnawake and Akwesasne soldiers. Both Battalions were well “dispersed overseas, as replacements”. Noticeably, Indian servicemen during their tenure of service were well acknowledged and prized, especially as snipers or sharpshooters and as scouts. The Indians served in many battalions like Pioneer, Labour and Forestry, “often performing heavy labour in construction while under fire”, also served in Railway Troops, the Veterinary Corporations, the Service Corporations and Canadian Engineers whereas “only a handful served in Air Force”. (RCAP 1996: 551) Thus, the experience of Indians in Great War illustrates the nature of “their persistence in volunteering, their insistence upon the ‘right’ to serve, their urgent demand to know the reasons for their rejection”, all these suggest that Indians war efforts were for “recognition of their equality”, to be treated as equals and that “they could achieve a glorious war record if even the opportunity”. (WALKER 1989: 26)

CANADIAN INDIAN SNIPERS¹⁵ AND THEIR ROLE IN GREAT WAR

During his period of service as a Deputy Superintendent of Department of Indian Affairs, Duncan C. Scott in *Annual Report*, 1918, wrote the following: “As I have stated in a previous report, the Indians excel as snipers, and many of them have distinguished themselves in this branch of the service... and it is understood that a number of other Indian snipers have made equally remarkable records”. (DIA 1917: 170) In 1921, Hon’ble Secretary of the Historical Society of Alberta, Everard Edmonds in his writing titled “Canada’s Red Army” mentioned, “At the front there were no better fighting men than the Canadian Indians. It was as marksmen that they specially distinguished themselves, and it is claimed that they did a great deal towards demoralizing the enemy system of sniping”. (EDMONDS 1921: 342)

This very well elevated the position of Indian soldiers as great snipers and their contribution to the Great World War. Indian soldiers’ excellence at sniping conveyed that their traditional lifestyle of hunting and trapping had become a valuable asset for Canadian Expeditionary Force. They distinguished themselves as remarkable snipers and scouts and “displayed their old-

time patience and self-control when engaged in this arduous work, recording each hit by a notch on their rifles”.¹⁶ This made them “natural snipers” and because of their extraordinary performance “DIA annual reports and newspaper articles alike made reference to Aboriginal soldiers’ specialized roles, often in tandem with tales of the men who had “never been out of the woods”, yet found their modern calling with the CEF”. (MACDOWALL 2015: 199)

Sharing his experiences as the former commandant of the third army sniping school, Major E. Penberthy states that the importance of Indian snipers and scouts emerged because “in the beginning of the war the enemy [Germany] was well equipped with expert snipers”. Various reports published in the early 1914 also “gave the world the impression that German soldiers were better shots” than British. “The German never was a better shot, or even as good a shot as the Britishers”. Calling it a ‘dirty’ War, Major Penberthy further says; “it was considered a “dirty” method of fighting and as not “playing the game”. (PENBERTHY 1920: 234) According to Penberthy, “there were no snipers” in the early days of the war and only a few men were selected and “trained to find small and indistinct targets to shoot at them on their own individual initiative and be sure to kill at the first shoot”. “Boche [German] snipers knew the value of this special training. Often behind his trench line as well as in it, and from cunningly constructed and concealed posts, they kept a vigilant watch on our lines. They picked off sentries and observers who carefully or sometimes unavoidably exposed themselves”.¹⁷ As a result, many Indian soldiers were recruited in Canadian army to counter Boche snipers because of their knowledge of their traditional hunting, scouting and trapping skills- the traits which made Indians earn an enviable position in the army as snipers.

In praise of Indians, Duncan C. Scott posited that: “No doubt, before long, the German had a wholesome fear of the Canadian methods of fighting, of the efficiency of our sharp-shooters..... [which] had a remote Indian origin and for the Indian himself.... he excelled in the kind of offensive that had been practiced by his ancestors and was native to him”. (SCOTT 1919: 285) He further wrote: “The Indian sharp-shooter will sit by the hours, still as bronze statue, watching from a vantage point for his prey. He has [had] a picturesque method of recording the results of his unerring aim- for each enemy whom he dispatches he cuts a notch on the stock of his rifle”¹⁸ Elaborating Indians methodology at sniping, Scott explains: “By using sand-bags the Indians would construct a position for concealment behind which they would remain for hours at a time, awaiting the appearance of the enemy at his sniping post; and even when he would appear the Indian would not shoot too soon, but would prefer to wait for the time when the German would from over-confidence show a little more of his body, and, thereby, add another notch to the stock of the Indian’s gun”¹⁹.

This method of dealing with enemy gave Indians a free hand at shooting and in this way, “they originated a very effective mode of discomfiting the enemy snipers”²⁰. Therefore, Indians soldiers’ in their specialized role as snipers and sharpshooters during the First World War were admired by British for their

patience, courage, stamina, efficiency and discipline. As tribal peoples of Canada, they spent most of their time in hunting and trapping. That's why "they were naturally expert marksmen. In consequence of this experience, they were able to do excellent work as snipers and some of them have remarkable records in that branch of the service"²¹. For example, Indian sniper named "Ballantyne, of the 8th Battalion, before getting wounded, killed more than 50 Germans.....and it is understood that a number of other Indian snipers have made equally remarkable records". (DIA 1917: 170) Major E. Penberthy states: "One of the finest snipers I ever met was a full blooded Red Indian-John Ballantyne. He applied all the methods of the chase, so familiar to him in his beloved Canadian forests, to hunting the Boche sniper. He had been known to wait patiently for seven days in a wonderfully prepared and concealed sniper's post for a valuable target- a Hun officer whom he finally killed."(PENBERTHY1920: 235)

Another notable snipers from 8th Battalion were Philip McDonald and Patrick Riel. Philip McDonald, an Iroquois, was credited with 40 shots while Patrick Riel, grandson to Louis Riel, had 38 shots and it has been said that Riel died eleven days after his peer McDonald. Other recorded snipers were Mississauga brothers, Pete and Sampson Comega. Three other snipers were Roderick Cameron, and Ojibwa and George Stonefish a Delaware from Ontario region. (WINEGARD 2012: 117) Despite colonizers' contempt for native Indian culture, Indians' ardent belief in their ancient belief system made them better soldiers. For example, "many [Indians] wore moccasins especially snipers and scouts, as they were quieter than boots"²². Such belief in their traditions, continuously made them utilize their traditional tactics, confirming their better martial abilities. Hence, Indians traditional knowledge helped them acquire recognition for themselves.

Among the early Indians to get recruited in CEF was Francis Pegahmagabow, an anishinaabe/Ojibwe from Parry Sound District, Ontario. Considered to be a "deadly sniper on the frontlines", he was "probably the most deadly efficient at the task, with a 'kill' score sometimes, unofficially, recorded as high as 378". Because of this, Pegahmagabow "was the most highly decorated Canadian Aboriginal soldier of World War I". With a military medal and two bars, he became "one of the only 39 men in the entire Canadian Expeditionary Force to be so rewarded" and also "one of the few Canadians to fight the war virtually from beginning to end". As a daring and skilled sniper and scout, Pegahmagabow always relied on traditional practices, which he thought protected him from all kinds of dangers. Calling it "survival through spiritual means", Steckley and Cummins believed that an upbringing with a spiritual sense of protection instilled confidence in Pegahmagabow. The sense of his being protected enabled him to engage more in trench warfare without fear. (STECKLEY AND CUMMINS 2005, 37-40) He also chewed on a dead twig during warfare thinking it offered protection in times of danger. Later, he offered the same practice to his fellow soldier Levi Nanibush who served in World War II. He stated: "I couldn't believe it, but I tried it and it sure enough works alright.....I was not afraid of anything because of what he told me". (HAYES 2005:29)

Such reliance on traditional practices gave Pegahmagabow determination and encouraged him to rise to respectable position of a great warrior. The First World War presented him an opportunity to escape his painful childhood as Adrian Hayes wrote for Pegahmagabow, "the hostilities probably presented an opportunity to leave a painful childhood behind and distinguish himself as a warrior in the tradition of his forefathers". On August 13, 1914, Pegahmagabow rushed to the recruiting centre and enlisted in the 23rd Northern Pioneers. (HAYES 2005:21) Soon, he was absorbed in 1st Battalion and his heroic deeds contributed to war effort.

Like Pegahmagabow, Henry Louis Norwest, a Cree-Metis from Alberta, too developed fearsome reputation as a sniper. With his record of 115 shots, he served in 50th Battalion and became an inspiration for his fellow soldiers. One of the soldiers wrote: Henry Norwest carried out his terrible duty superbly because he believed his special skill gave him no choice but to fulfill his indispensable mission.....we found him pleasant and kindly, quite naturally one of us and always an inspiration". (WHEELER 2000:289) Duncan Scott writes that Henry Norwest was envied by his fellow soldiers because "he carried a special rifle fitted with a telescopic sight". Describing his observational skill at sniping, Scott elaborates: "Norwest would wait for days for a man and would never fire unless his position was absolutely secure from enemy observation. His patience and perseverance are said to have appeared to be almost superhuman". Much of his time he spent on No Man's Land roaming in dark hours looking for enemies". (SCOTT 1919:312) Norwest won Military Medal in 1917 for his bravery at Vimy Ridge, giving him a distinction of one of the leading snipers among Canadian Indian soldiers.

These are but a few names that archival databases mention; these snipers seemed to have successfully utilized their traditional weaponry skills to contribute towards Canada's victory in the Great War. However, fighting along with their European combatants got them recognition and honour with the award of Military Medals, as shown in the case of Pegahmagabow and Norwest. However, it did not help them win the right to equality with fellow Britishers after their return back home.

WAR VETERANS AND THEIR GRIEVANCES

Not surprising, due to large number of Indian recruitment in war, "casualties among them were very heavy". (DIA 1919: 13) Further, after the end of the war and on their arrival back home to Canada, they felt disappointed when despite their war efforts, the social condition of Indians did not improve. Irrespective of their wartime service overseas, Indian veterans encountered poverty and unequal treatment. They were also denied access to benefits provided by Soldier Settlement Act of 1915²³. Wounded and physically hurt, "returning veterans found themselves in the care of the new Department of Soldier's civil Re-establishment-provided they were not status Indians. Status Indians who returned to reserves found themselves under the control of Indian affairs for matters pertaining to their war service". (RCAP1996: 552) "Their re-subjugation under existing Indian policy, compared to their overseas experiences,

rekindled their drive to stand up to the policies that contributed to their poor living conditions". (THOMPSON 2004:xiv) For example, after his return from war, Francis Pegahmagabow suffered in poverty for many years on Parry Island reserve. Under the Soldier Settlement Act, he wanted to apply for a loan but Indian agent repetitively refused him loan on the grounds of his post- traumatic war syndrome and declared him mentally unfit to do any work. This, according to Joseph Boyden, was not only happening with Francis Pegahmagabow but "this happened to a lot of Native soldiers coming home". Boyden also points that "the problem with World War I is that records were not kept very well, especially when it came to Native enlistment and the role of Natives in the War". (WYILE 2007: 226)

Historically, Indians' enrollment for war along with their enthusiasm, a sense of loyalty and patriotism did little to improve their conditions after their arrival home from the Great War. Their functional role was reduced to that of farmers towards improvement in agricultural productions. After the war, veterans were expected to do farming for which assistance (loans) were offered through Soldier Settlement Act and the Department of Indian Affairs hoped that the returned soldiers would "make up his mind to make farming his life work and he must give the department [Indian affairs] ample assurance that he will be able to not only to repay the loans made to him, but as well make a sufficient living for himself and his dependents". (SCOTT 1919: 4)

Many First World War veterans claim equal treatment during their war services but discrimination and prejudiced treatment on their return to the civilian life. Even government policies like Soldier Settlement Act of 1919 did not improve their living conditions. (DEMPSEY 1999: 51) Moreover, by this time, Indians' relationship with Canadian federal government had altered from being "allies" to "wards", and more recently "nations within" in Canadian multicultural society. As a consequent, natives started to re-assert their identities. In the latter half of the twentieth century, native movements became more pronounced.

Deprivation of their basic fundamental rights to the land which they inhabited before the arrival of the Europeans made them address the issue of colonization and deliberate erosion of their identity. They were and are still seeking recognition of their indigenous rights to self-governance or self-determination with respect to land, resources and culture, an important component of their indigenous identity. They also emphasize on treaties of equality made with non- natives upon their arrival on Canadian land and cite them as a basis for getting equal rights and treatment in the modern Canadian society. As part of the larger native political issues, war veterans publicized their own experiences in the form of stories in various native newspapers and magazines like the *Indian News*, *Tekawennake*, *Windspeaker*, the *Saskatchewan Indian* and many more. Native organizations like Federation of Saskatchewan Indians raised issues pertaining to applicability of federal policies like the *Soldier Settlement Act* and the *Veteran's Land Act*. (LACKENBAUER and SHEFFIELD 2007: 212) Generally

speaking, it is believed that publication of various scholarly articles and literatures led to Canadian Indian soldiers find a place in Canada's national history. For example, the editor of a book titled *We Were There*, produced by Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, stated that: "I want to publish...to let Indian children know that their fathers and grandfathers fought for the freedom we now cherish. Many of the Indian veterans who fought for this freedom did not come back"²⁴. While Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples writes that: "what the veterans want is not a matter of financial recompense alone: they want recognition, confirmation from the government that they have fulfilled their side of the alliance by serving the nation to their utmost", thereby making us understand that various Canadian veteran programs²⁵ had moderate success. (RCAP 1996: 547)

CONCLUSION

Canada's native Indians along with European settlers have equally shared the responsibility of fighting in the Great War even though the estimated number of their participation remains unclear till date. Nevertheless, Indians have been praised for their contribution in the war. Individual soldiers like Francis Pegahmagabow, Corporal Norwest, Ballantine among several others have gained recognition and their names have been listed in official Canadian records as brilliant snipers and scouts.

For Indians, enrollment for the First World War was an opportunity to assert their identity as the original natives of Canada. They hoped that their participation in the War would bring about a positive change in their relationship with the state. Indeed, their involvement in overseas battles and their excellence in sniping and scouting were well appreciated by the state armed forces and they were decorated with Military Medals and bars. Since native Indians' had allied with French settlers and then with the British during the resettlement of Canada's land, their services as snipers and scouts in the World War I were also an opportunity to show the fast-changing world their superior war skills and gain credibility as brave, shrewd soldiers at par with the Europeans.

The Great War proved native Indians were better attuned to warfare than all Canadians. Significantly, their war efforts were aimed at leveraging their exemplary service to the state's freedom and stability to an improvement in the social living conditions of their native communities. They fought in World War I as indigenous tribes as well as solid citizens of their country. They fought for the Canadian land and distinguished themselves as a cultural group deeply committed to the state.

Despite the insufficient documentation, Indian soldiers' contribution to the Great War has been recognized by the state armed forces, an act which led to a better acceptance of their native identity in the Canadian society. This also led to their better integration and assimilation into a pluralist Canadian society.

FOOTERNOTES

1. In this article, Indians refer to both Treaty and Non-Treaty Native peoples who served in First World War however, during war only

- Treaty Indians were allowed to enlist. Quite often terms, natives and Indians will be used interchangeably in this article.
2. The Evening World, Daily Magazine, April 19, 1918. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030193/1918-04-19/ed-1/seq-20.pdf>
 3. RENAUD, Ralph E., "Red men Now on War Path against German Kaiser, Fresno Republican, 11 August 1918. Cite in BARSH R. L (1991), "American Indians and the Great War", Ethnohistory, vol. 38 (3), pp. 288.
 4. Treaties made in 19th century and negotiations surrounding that assured Indians their rights to land, fishing, hunting and trapping. For further reference see J. Rick Ponting and Roger Gibbons, *Out of Irrelevance: A Social-Political Introduction to Indian Affairs in Canada*, Canada: Butterworth and Company Limited.
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 6. Editorial Comment, "The American Magazine, The Quaterly Journal of the Society of American Indians, Vol. 5(1), January-March 1917, pp. 9. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081688537;view=1up;seq=11>
 7. French settlers recognized native peoples territorial rights instead of expropriating it. It was more towards mutual protection and economic necessity. However, the imperial rivalry between French and British led to Seven Years War 1754-1763, also known as French and Indian War. With the victory in favour of British in Seven Years War, French were driven away and this gave an opportunity to British to act free on North American Land.
 8. The War of 1812 was against American expansionism. As a colony Britain, Canadian Indians participated in this war and their military co-operation was well appreciated by British people.
 9. Reserves were governed by the band council. It was supposed that the reserves which were governed by the band council which in turn were administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs does not appear to be working because reserves suffered from chronic housing shortages and the indigenous peoples living there endured much poverty, suffered high unemployment than others living in Canada.
 10. Ibid
 11. Ibid
 12. Ibid.13
 13. Quoted in WEAVER, Jace, *The Red Atlantic*, pp. 127
 14. J.D.McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs wrote to Eugene Fiset, Surgeon General, Deputy of Militia and Defense. LAC RD 10 Vol. 6766 File 452, 4 December 1915, pp-13
 15. The term 'Sniper' was largely popularized by British officials during Great War. It is used for a person person "who possessed all the skills of a successful snipe hunter. However, the proficiency of the military sniper evolved into an art as advancements in weapons, equipment and techniques were made". More information see *Sniper: Training and Employment*, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 14 June, 1989. <http://www.emilitarymanuals.com/pdf/SpecialOps/TC23-14.pdf>
 16. Ibid
 17. Ibid 235
 18. Scott 1919, 311
 19. Ibid ,312
 20. Ibid
 21. Ibid, 311
 22. Wingard, 112
 23. Under Soldier Settlement Act, benefits like loans were granted at 5% annum. Apart from this, pensions, land settlement and other veterans assistance were offered to World War 1 veterans, upon their discharge from armed forces.
 24. Quoted in *Native Soldiers-Foreign Battlefields*, pp. 40.
 25. See ENGLAND, Robert, *Canada's Program to Aid its Veterans*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 238, pp. 95-102.

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